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Addendum**

Youth and children discussion paper on water, sanitation and human settlements***

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Water and sanitation

I. Introduction

1. By 2050 at least one person out of four is likely to live in a country affected by chronic or recurrent shortages of freshwater. Some 6,000 children die every day from diseases associated with lack of access to safe drinking water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene. The future will be the present for the youth of today. This is why we are more and more active in organizing networks and youth projects, and why we continue to shout to try to get your attention.

2. The youth and children major group would like to begin by noting that we are all already aware of the importance of water and sanitation in sustainable development and the reduction of poverty, this already having been identified as being of critical importance at Rio de Janeiro, Johannesburg and countless other meetings and conferences over the years. We hope that this session of the Commission on Sustainable Development will not be just another occasion to restate the already agreed upon urgency surrounding this issue, but rather that it will focus on what government actions are taking place in order to actually achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

II. Why youth and children are concerned

3. The youth and children major group is particularly concerned about this issue because:

(a) Water shortage problems that we talked about 10 years ago are emerging as we speak. Countries with water shortages have even more problems, while countries that had no water shortages are starting to experience problems of their own, including water shortages in summer months and problems relating to the pumping of groundwater, etc.;

(b) Water pollution is occurring. Our lakes and rivers increasingly contain a cocktail of chemicals, runoffs, untreated waste and many other substances that have a direct, long-term effect on the health of our children;

(c) Increasingly, conflicts will develop over water, conflicts that we will have to face in the future, not you. Although there have not yet been any wars for water, at the rate we are going, they will come. We are here now to make sure that an already foreseeable problem does not come about;

(d) Youth and children are often the most concerned with water shortages and sanitation, which affect the health and well-being of our young people and their ability to attain a certain age or get the proper education needed in order to create a better world;

(e) Youth and children represent more than 30 per cent of the world population and in most cases are never given a voice. However, it is the youth of today that will be playing important roles in these meetings tomorrow.

III. Developments and challenges

4. The need for better water governance locally, nationally, regionally and globally is critical, and it is a challenge since the current water crisis has often arisen more from poor governance than from water scarcity. Good governance in the water sector means sound management and involves stakeholder participation, transparency and accountability.

5. Ensuring environmentally sustainable water supply and sanitation services for human settlements, including urban dwellings, remains a challenge, notwithstanding major investments in water supply and waste-water treatment over the past three decades in many countries.

6. Trans-border mega-development projects, involving big dams, oil and gas exploration, railways and other infrastructure, indiscriminate and destructive mining, inappropriate land use, industrial agriculture and urbanization, have made access to water for the poor a luxury. Poor water quality and deplorable sanitation remain the bane of the existence of the world's marginalized communities.

7. Rural communities do not consider water and sanitation a priority area. Social mapping in Svuure, Zaka district, Zimbabwe, showed that people were very much concerned with issues such as food and roads, while water and sanitation were not of primary concern. There is a great need to educate rural communities on the importance of water and sanitation.

8. The scepticism surrounding the empowerment of youth through full disclosure of plans, programmes and policies is still a problem at the local, national and regional levels. An attitudinal change has to occur soon if youth is to play a more meaningful role in sustainable development.

9. Over 24 billion hours are lost each year in caring for those with diarrhoea. The situation has been observed to be particularly acute in developing countries, and children are particularly affected.

10. Treating diseases caused by poor sanitation, unhygienic practices and unsafe water supplies costs the equivalent of about $20 billion every year, and the burden is especially pronounced in developing countries.

IV. Some youth-led developments

11. Capacity-building workshops and seminars have been organized by youth and senior water experts from ministries. The objectives of these meetings have been to address the gap between young water professionals, youth and senior experts. Youth groups have managed to establish a working relationship with the Ministry of Rural Resources and Water Development in Zimbabwe.

12. The Botswana youth water teams have established a three-tiered structure for youth to participate in awareness workshops for integrated water resources management. The first tier is a network of young people aged from 13 to 18 with an interest in water issues. The second group is young people at the tertiary education level also with an interest in water issues. The third group is young water professionals — young people who are already working or who are attached to institutions.

13. Exchange study tours have been successfully implemented within southern Africa, and to date the Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho youth water teams have participated. The objective of these tours is to share ideas and initiate constructive debate on water-related issues, sanitation and the environment. Guest Lecturers and senior water experts are also invited to share their knowledge.

14. The Lesotho Youth Water and Sanitation Campaign is a means to maintain the focus on awareness, advocacy and communication within the region for sustainable livelihoods. This is an opportunity to involve young people in the attainment of the sanitation target set at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002). It is a challenge for young people to lobby for community awareness, support for sanitation and political will for this important cause and to present its case at the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

15. The International Year of Freshwater (coordinated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs) put together a network of youth-led water initiatives around the globe, a network which will continue to expand and work with the United Nations in the upcoming Decade for Action, "Water for Life", and Decade for Education for Sustainable Development.

V. Lessons learned, trends observed and obstacles to overcome

A. Providing tools for action

16. Governments are not alone in having to take action towards sustainable water use. Many different groups in society, youth in particular, are active and want to get involved. But in many instances they lack the tools to do so (access to information, resources, funds, means, etc.). We consider that:

(a) An effort should be made to provide more opportunities and tools to different groups of society so that they can organize themselves to help their communities have access to water or consume less water;

(b) Mechanisms and programmes that facilitate the sharing of and easy access to information for all groups are crucial, whether through Internet technology or other means.

B. Involving youth in the process

17. Youth are the initiators of change. We can transfer our knowledge to our own peer group, but also to those people closest to us, our families. By using this bottom-up approach, a greater awareness of water-related problems would come about in local communities and, in the long term, in the international community. Youth have the ability to create fresh, innovative ideas and the capability to implement them.

18. Youth are organized, and networks of young people around the globe, working at the local level, continue to develop. These groups, although they have the human resources and manpower to change their communities, do not have access to appropriate funding or the capacity to implement those programmes. Youth groups

around the world are becoming increasingly active and aware of the issues. Youth are inspiring other youth around the world, with little funding and a lot of professionalism. This is definitely a resource to tap into.

C. Involving all groups in the process and the search for solutions

19. On the basis of experiences in a number of countries, a multi-stakeholder partnership at the various levels of society among the various governmental, non-governmental, business and private sector organizations and institutions that are taking initiatives for programmes and projects on water, sanitation, human settlements and sustainable development in general is indeed one of the successful strategies.

20. Youth is defined in Agenda 21 as the only transitional sector, meaning that all young people will eventually graduate to join the main sectors of society. Youth is therefore the key to the sustainability of leadership for a developed and sustainable world. Hence, it is vital that young people, as leaders of today and tomorrow, be trained and equipped to the process of ensuring a sustainable world.

21. Youth and children, as a group, are currently part of, and will become the leaders of and active participants in, all other groups of society. In order for them to make a difference in the future, the work described below needs to be done now.

22. Youth will be the future governments and delegations. Governments repeat the same statements in many different languages over and over at these meetings. Some recognize the importance of issues but do not want to have to deal with them; others try to cover up the issues with technical details. Take strong positions on these issues and encourage your ministries countries and local governments by offering them opportunities and resources to get involved in participating in the fulfilment of promises that you have made internationally;

(a) Youth need to be part of official delegations, as well as young national leaders who are working to make a difference;

(b) Youth need to be consulted and involved in the development of government positions and policies before, during and after these meetings.

23. Youth will be the future leaders in business and industry. Business and industry increasingly have a major role to play in sustainable development, not just because they can offer financial resources and expertise, but because they are huge consumers of water, and often make decisions to save money by polluting the environment and building dams;

(a) Business schools need to focus on educating future leaders in business and industry to incorporate sustainable development in all of their policies, whether profitable or not;

(b) Work must be done now so that when the youth of today are leaders in this field, the concepts of "the polluter pays", sustainable development, etc., are mainstreamed in the business world, business mentality and business studies;

(c) Tools and incentives must be provided for industry to use water resources efficiently, including strict laws at the local, national and international levels against pollution, etc.

24. Young women of today will be the educated women leaders of tomorrow. Water shortages and domestic chores mean that young women around the world have less education and fewer opportunities. Women should be enabled to have a proper education or to develop their full potential to contribute to society. Education for women and access to water will provide a huge impetus towards attaining the goals set in many countries around the world.

25. Farmers, as major consumers of water, have a very important role to play in water management. As more and more young people are turning away from life on the farm and moving to cities, traditional farming is being replaced by mega-farms which often consume more water and pollute more;

(a) The new generation of farmers needs to be educated about water issues as they relate to their profession, and information should be made available to farmers;

(b) Government incentives and subsidies should be made available to encourage farmers to make environmentally friendly decisions and to encourage the continuation of traditional and family farming.

26. Young indigenous people have learned from their elders to respect their environment and water. New generations of indigenous youth should not lose this, and they should share it with others around the world. We all, and not just indigenous peoples, should feel this closeness to our lands and pride in our resources;

(a) Listen and learn from the indigenous people of today so that we do not lose the wealth of water-related knowledge;

(b) Revive traditional community-specific water management systems, and/or incorporate them into existing practices.

27. Youth will be the scientists of tomorrow. Young scientists should be encouraged and trained to focus on finding solutions for sustainable development in science, concentrating on creating environmentally friendly solutions to water problems.

28. Youth will be the local authorities of tomorrow. Change needs to occur simultaneously at the national level and the local level. Local authorities have incredible power to do work in their local communities. As they can take into consideration the people, conditions and culture specific to their area of authority, they are very important actors in the promotion of sustainable development;

(a) Local authorities should be educated on issues of water and sustainable development and trained in how to facilitate the use and management of water;

(b) Paragraph 170 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, on the setting up and strengthening of local youth councils, should be implemented to ensure and train the future leaders and officials of local government.

29. United Nations agencies have an important role to play, as their programmes should be coordinated to provide expertise, resources and projects and to encourage dialogue with various groups of society and Governments for the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals;

(a) Provide indicators and resources for Governments and work on capacity-building and providing information for Governments and various groups of society;

(b) Develop programmes and put resources into the programmes already in place to help implement Agenda 21, achieve the Millennium Development Goals, etc.;

(c) Continue the work with youth started during the International Year of Freshwater and carry it on into the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development and the Decade for Action, "Water for Life".

30. In order to reach the Millennium Development Goals on water and sanitation, all of these groups need to work together and sit at the same tables. Each group has an expertise that is needed to reach the solutions; no group can be left out.

VI. Focus areas

A. Poverty eradication

31. Access to water and sanitation is of great importance for the fight against poverty, but these goals are rarely incorporated into poverty reduction strategies. Issues affecting the supply of and equitable access to freshwater and adequate sanitation should be better integrated in the national poverty reduction strategies.

B. Changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption

32. Education for consumers, business and industry and farmers is crucial for changing unsustainable patterns of consumption of water and its use in production. Government regulations and incentives should be put into place to ensure this.

C. Means of implementation

33. Governments must maintain and develop international environmental law protecting freshwater through the prompt ratification and efficient creation of international treaties. Additionally, cooperative initiatives must be provided through education and the implementation of a favourable legal and economic framework for access to environmental information and public participation. In this way water will become a driving force for the mobilization of civil society.

34. Water is a public good. Water cannot be sold for profit and industries should not benefit from the poor. International financial institutions should promote local water cooperatives and should not make private sector involvement a precondition for funding.

D. Gender equality

35. In many countries, girls spend as long as three hours a day fetching water, an energy expenditure representing more than one third of their daily food intake. In schools, when water is needed, it is girls who are sent to fetch it, taking time away from their studies and play. Household chores — such as fetching water — keep many girls out of school or seriously affect their performance at school.

36. Africa's girls are hardest hit by poor water and sanitation situations. Many are kept at home to do domestic work, including care of the sick and water collection. As many as 20 million girls in Africa — 1 out of 10 — may be deprived of an education in this way. Those who go to school often drop out soon after puberty because of lack of safe, clean and private sanitation facilities.

E. Education

37. Since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the international community has recognized the vital link between access to quality education and the health and well-being of the international youth community, as well as the need for capacity-building and consciousness-raising. The word "education" appears over 600 times in Agenda 21, second only to the word "government". As we enter the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development and the Decade for Action, "Water for Life", we urge that new resources continue to be developed for teachers, students and youth in the formal and informal education community.

38. The Southern Africa Region Vision for Water, Life and the Environment advocates for a future in which there is equitable and sustainable utilization of water for social and environmental justice, regional integration and economic benefit for present and future generations. This vision clearly stresses and recommends the involvement of youth. This in itself shows the need to establish and support more youth-based associations.

39. The major challenge for many countries, especially the developing countries, in respect of youth is to ensure that they are given enough opportunities in life. Decisions made at the top often adversely affect those at the bottom; hence the great need for a bottom-up approach.

40. Computer technology and Internet access should be maximized as a means of promoting consideration of water and sanitation issues. The education system, from the primary to the tertiary level, should train new generations to be water managers. Teachers should also be trained and educated on water issues and sustainable development; access to teacher-training workshops on water should be supported and promoted.

VII. Policy directions

41. Education on water issues, such as conservation and the need to treat water as finite, non-renewable and vulnerable, should be considered a prerequisite to improve health care and sanitation. Youth actions should be taken into account in the implementation of such educational programmes.

42. Water and sanitation issues should be prioritized, securing their integration into Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, Millennium Development Goals reports, national sustainable development strategies and other national plans.

43. Appropriate links should be developed between national, regional and youth organizations on water management issues. Appropriate indicators should be developed to reflect the importance of water for sustainable development and

poverty eradication, and good practices relating to water and sanitation should be compiled.

44. A participatory approach involving all stakeholders and ensuring good communication and coordination among all actors should be promoted so that development decisions reflect the concerns of all and so as to encourage cooperation between governmental, non-governmental and private sector activities.

VIII. Conclusions

45. In the Framework for Action on Water and Sanitation, a comprehensive list of action areas, indicative targets and milestones and examples of activities needed to reach them was compiled. At this session of the Commission on Sustainable Development we should focus on developing work such as this instead of starting, yet again, from the beginning and analysing, yet again, Agenda 21, which we all know by heart by now. With only two sessions to discuss the issue, we need to go directly to the point.

46. Youth and children's focus is on education at all levels, both informal and formal, and on water and sanitation for sustainable development, as access and education regarding water in all disciplines will train a new generation not only to be efficient water users in their professions and lives, to create sustainable policies in their governments and to wash their hands to prevent disease, but also to develop a water culture that will be crucial in the future protection and appreciation of this vital resource.

Human settlements

IX. Introduction

47. The overall human settlement objective is to improve the social, economic and environmental quality of human settlements and the living and working environments of all people, in particular the urban and rural poor. Such improvement should be based on technical cooperation activities, partnerships among the public, private and community sectors and participation in the decision-making process by vulnerable groups such as women, the elderly and children, who are our future leaders. The need for acceptable human settlements has been extensively discussed in Agenda 21.

48. Human development is one of the main objectives of sustainable development. But what is the actual situation on the ground in 2004, 12 years after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, followed by other related conferences? How has Agenda 21 been implemented on the ground? Have living standards been improved? Do people have basic amenities? The situation, particularly in developing countries, is humiliating, morally degrading, pathetic and oppressive.

49. Expectations raised at previous conferences have not been fulfilled. A lot of people still lack access to at least decent accommodation. Anne-Marie Sacquet has written that inequality is intolerable from the point of view of our common humility, and in the long term, it threatens social and economic structures.

50. The 2002 *World Atlas of Sustainable Development* estimated that by 2025 the world's total urban population will have doubled, reaching 5 billion (6 of every 10 human beings).

51. In 1996, at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul, it was estimated that at least 1 billion people worldwide did not have a suitable place to live and that over 100 million were homeless. It is quite important for all Heads of State to realize that poor housing has catastrophic effects on the general welfare of people in any context. In urban areas, particularly in developing countries, this has resulted in the sprouting of squatter slums. Such slums in Zimbabwe, for example, are poorly serviced in terms of basic amenities such as clean water and sanitation, among others. The health of the people, especially children with a weak immune system, is adversely affected. There is pollution and no privacy. Crime rates are quite high in these squatter settlements. In Zimbabwe, squatter camps around Harare have been declared dangerous areas that are off limits especially to visitors, where survival is for the fittest.

52. It is in most cases women and their children who bear the worst living conditions in such places, while men go on drinking sprees. Many households headed by women are also very vulnerable to eviction by city authorities, and very few can stand up and defend their interests.

53. The United Nations Millennium Declaration recognizes the dire circumstances of the world's urban poor. The present worldwide slum population, if its growth goes unchecked, will multiply threefold by 2050.

54. In Asia, only 3 per cent of public funding is set aside for management by local communities, compared with an average of about 40 per cent in industrialized countries.

55. A new approach to development is required at this juncture. Action-oriented schemes need to be seriously put in place. The problems at hand need to be tackled head-on. The major question to be addressed is, Why are all these problems persisting and rising to unbearable levels in developing countries? Why are women and youth particularly in danger? The answers might appear to be simple, but the situation is more complex on the ground. Once these questions are addressed with open minds from both angles, then the concept of sustainable development can be realized.

56. As a point of departure, there is a greater need to seriously consider the dual role of women. The position of men, women and youth in all spheres of society needs to be considered to identify their specific potentials, aspirations and practical and strategic needs.

57. Human settlement development has largely underemphasized, if not altogether ignored, two basic roles that women play on behalf of society. Women have both reproductive and productive roles and are often overburdened by society. Their unpaid, labour-intensive activities are seldom considered real work, yet they are crucial for human survival.

58. It is very important for the Commission on Sustainable Development to note that poor living conditions have adverse effects on the health of society as well as on the reproductive performance of women and on the quality of upbringing of their children. Consequently, children, who are potential future leaders, are caught in a

vicious circle, along with other groups such as women, indigenous people, the elderly and the disabled.

59. These approaches should form the core principles of national settlement strategies. In developing these strategies, countries will need to set priorities among the eight programme areas in accordance with their national plans and objectives, taking fully into account their social and cultural capabilities.

60. Furthermore, countries should make appropriate provisions to monitor the impact of their strategies on marginalized and disenfranchised groups, with particular reference to the needs of women and children.

61. In industrialized countries, urban consumption is placing severe stress on the global ecosystem, while settlements in the developing world need more raw materials, energy and economic development simply to overcome basic economic and social problems. In many developing countries, government has established housing schemes to serve the people, but there are loopholes that have made these schemes a dismal failure. One simple issue that governments have ignored is gender analysis. This goes beyond viewing the community from the standpoint of physical deprivation, addressing structural issues within the community. In identifying and addressing only physical needs, there is a risk of creating problems for some gender groups or even marginalizing them, particularly, women and children.

X. National housing policy

62. The national housing policy in Nigeria was launched in 1991 in response to the global strategy for shelter recommended in Agenda 21. It is aimed at achieving sustainable human settlement development. However, housing development policies are skewed in favour of those in the middle and upper income brackets. Proposed housing development for the poor is either insufficient or is hijacked by the rich, and thus children are not catered for at all. The poor cannot afford the cost of acquisition, let alone offer collateral security.

XI. What needs to be done?

63. It is difficult to highlight specific obstacles facing women and children in the context of human settlement policies and programmes, an area often perceived by planners as affecting all people equally irrespective of gender. However, the impacts of current economic and spatial policies can be shown to be particularly negative for the poor, and it is women and children who are worst affected as a result of misguided policies and programmes. This points to the urgent need to ensure:

(a) A gender-sensitive approach in the development and implementation of all policies, including housing policies. A gender-sensitive approach will generate data that is disaggregated by gender, class and age;

(b) The adoption of an integrated approach to the provision of water, electricity, sanitation, drainage and solid waste management;

(c) Appropriate implementation and monitoring of master plans for major towns where they exist, and preparation and implementation of new ones where they are non-existent or out of date;

(d) Improved rural economies through the development of cottage and agro-allied industries to create job opportunities for rural dwellers, and thereby stem the tide of rural-urban migration;

(e) That at least 75 per cent of rural communities are provided with social amenities to stimulate and sustain self-reliant development to curb rural-urban migration;

(f) The encouragement of private sector and community participation in activities relating to urban renewal, housing and infrastructure;

(g) The establishment of a national human settlement data bank to provide baseline information that can be used to better plan for sustainable human settlements;

(h) The promotion of easy access to land, especially for low-income families;

(i) An improved revenue base for human settlement management.

XII. Policy directions

64. Governments are not alone in having to take action for the provision of acceptable infrastructure; youth need to be given ample support in all their endeavours, be it through the contribution of ideas or enabling them to acquire the best education. However, government policies are crucial instruments for socially equitable, economically viable and structurally efficient development. To this end, it is very important for governments to develop policies that are transparent and gender sensitive.

65. There is a great need to upgrade squatter settlements through the provision of basic infrastructure and services. The beneficiary communities must have an active role in this. They must contribute in any way possible, and in fact they must be initiators of development. This will reduce donor dependency syndrome.

XIII. Conclusions

66. Governments should implement all protocols signed and implement all agreements based on Agenda 21.

67. The various regulatory bodies, which include the Federal Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Petroleum Resources, should be strengthened so as to regulate the practices of oil companies in the Niger delta. There should be an increase in tree-planting, and the Government should jump-start a participatory approach to housing the poor through a joint effort by the public and private sectors as well as the community.